

# Hapes: Ladies First

## Planet Hoppers: May 2004

By [Cory Herndon](#)

Welcome to "Planet Hoppers," where each month, we bring you a set of articles on a particular world in the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* galaxy that a Gamemaster can use separately or as a linked series of events.

This month's installment offers the popular view of Hapes during the Rebellion era courtesy of the best-selling, though poorly fact-checked, datafile *Planet of the Amazons: A True Story of Peril in the Hapes Cluster*. Be sure to check back each week for a new installment.



### Part 1: Planet of the Amazons

In which a pirate-turned-author recalls a fateful shortcut through the Hapes Cluster.

### Part 2: Return to the Planet of the Amazons

In which the pirate prisoners explore Star Home, flagship of the Queen of Hapes.

### Part 3: Beneath the Planet of the Amazons

In which our pirate heroes endure interrogation by Ta'a Chume in her underground dungeon.

### Part 4: Escape from the Planet of the Amazons

In which two pirate prisoners face execution on trumped-up charges of crimes against Hapes.

### **About the Author**

One-time *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* editor Cory J. Herndon is now a freelancer. Cory's work has appeared in *Amazing Stories*, *Duelist*, *TopDeck*, *Star Wars Gamer*, *Dragon*, and *SCIFI.com*. He has done additional design work on the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* revised core rulebook (primarily the Droids chapter), *The Dark Side Sourcebook* (creatures and archetypes), and the *Wheel of Time Roleplaying Game*. He is also the author of Volumes 5 and 6 of the **Magic: The Gathering Encyclopedia**. Cory's short story "Like Spider's Silk" appears in the *Secrets of Magic* Anthology. He asks that you please purchase a copy of it and the **D&D** novel *The Living Dead* for every room in your home. Cory is currently authoring original content for *Xbox.com*, writing the third book in an upcoming *Magic: The Gathering* novel trilogy, and continuing to design *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* material for the Wizards website.

# Part 1: Planet of the Amazons

By Cory Herndon

*Founded over four thousand millennia before the Battle of Yavin, the Hapes Consortium is a matriarchal society that remained isolated from galactic civilization until Princess Leia Organa and Han Solo helped forge a treaty between the worlds of the Hapes Cluster and the New Republic.*

*Before this groundbreaking diplomatic event, information about the Hapans and the goings-on behind the Transitory Mists -- a protective field of ionized space -- came from ancient documents or highly sensationalized "true" holofilms and datafiles. Historians knew that the formation of the Hapes Cluster was quite strange, with 63 inhabited worlds in close proximity, and protected from invasion by the ionized particles and roaming stellar bodies of their outer region. The formation is so unusual, and so effective for protecting a small empire, that many speculate it may have been a grand celestial project from pre-Republic history like the Maw or the Corellian system. Surviving Old Republic records also confirmed that the Cluster was settled by Humans when pirates known as the Lorell Raiders found a few safe routes through the Mists and used it as a hideout, kidnapping the most beautiful Human females in the galaxy as mates. After the ancient Jedi defeated the Raiders, the women of Hapes declared a matriarchal monarchy and took charge of the entire cluster.*

*The surviving Lorell Raiders (soon to take on the moniker "Hapan pirates") were forced to take refuge in the Mists. To this day, Hapans are considered strikingly attractive by most beings, and the pirates often marry Hapan nobles, keeping the isolated gene pool vibrant. Other than that, the only evidence that the Consortium remained strong and in power were tales from survivors of incidents on the Hapan border, many of which were impossible to confirm. For the most part, the galaxy at large simply stayed out of Hapes' way, and vice versa. During the Rebellion Era, a greatly expanded Hapan military at the order of Hapan Queen Mother Ta'a Chume reinforced this noninterference.*

*Meanwhile, more popular entertainments dating all the way back to the Mandalorian Wars invariably portrayed the women of Hapes as bloodthirsty amazon warriors, lusty and powerful, kidnapping men to satisfy their craven desires and keeping them as cattle, and controlling the worlds of the Consortium with a mighty fleet of Battle Dragons. The last part was right.*

*One such datafile straddled the factual and the mythical. Planet of the Amazons: The Tale of the Pirate Ship Mourning Glory by Grov Bricker is indeed the actual memoir of a Corellian pirate captured by the Hapans not long before the destruction of the Death Star. This much was documented in official records. The details described by Bricker in his story, however, reflect the popularity of the "amazon" image of the Hapans, and is filled with lasciviously gratuitous elements that made it the bestselling datafile in the Empire for several months -- though few would admit they actually had a copy.*

*This week's excerpt describes Captain Bricker's first encounter with the Hapans. The pirate ship Mourning Glory has been pulled out of hyperspace in the middle of trying a new shortcut through the Inner Rim . . .*

**Planet:** Hapes  
**Planet Type:** Terrestrial  
**Climate:** Temperate  
**Terrain:** Cities, forests, mountains  
**Atmosphere:** Breathable  
**Gravity:** Standard  
**Diameter:** 12,254 km  
**Length of Day:** 22 standard hours  
**Length of Year:** 240 local days  
**Sentient Species:** Humans (Hapans)  
**Language:** Hapan, Basic  
**Population:** 8 billion  
**Species Mix:** Humans (Hapans)  
**Government:** Hereditary Matriarchy  
**Major Exports:** None  
**Major Imports:** Foodstuffs, high technology  
**Region:** Inner Rim (Hapes Cluster Interior Region)  
**System/Star:** Hapes  

Planets Type	Moons
Hapes	Terrestrial 7

"Just look at that, would you?" I said. Alarm whistles and flashing lights were all over the board, and I quickly shut them down so I could think. I jammed a finger at the holo our droid Arf flashed in the empty air of the cockpit. "All the data this broken-down excuse for an astromech has on Hapes. Home of the Queen Mother. That's where she lives, it says. In the center of the Cluster."

"Right," said Kelan Faal. Arf emitted a gurgling groan that didn't sound very droidlike.

"We're at the edge of the Cluster, just outside the, what did you call it --"

"The Transitory Mists region," Kelan interrupted. My Hapan first mate didn't appear disturbed in the slightest. If anything, he looked amused. The astromech sputtered as the holo went out. Arf rolled over to a dead power socket and vainly attempted to draw power, but it looked like he'd be headed back to the shop soon. Assuming we got out of this alive.

I checked the sensors to make sure my eyes were getting the same information as the ship's working instruments. The *Mourning Glory* was not a small vessel, easily the match of the average smuggler or another pirate ship, but we were definitely outclassed, to say the least.

"I've taken this shortcut at least a dozen times," Kelan repeated for the fourth time. "We're well clear of any hyperspace interdiction mines that I know about."

"Well, something knocked us out of hyperspace, and took the hyperdrive with it. We're running on batteries. And I haven't taken your shortcut a dozen times. So what I want to know is," I said through clenched teeth, "if we're sectors away from the Queen of the Hapan Amazons, and this shortcut is completely safe, and the coordinates were programmed perfectly, and the Queen Mum never leaves her home base unless Hapes is going to war, why in Palpatine's name are we sitting parked in front of the *flagship of the Hapan fleet*?"

"That," Kelan said, "I can't tell you. But I think we're going to find out one way or the other."

## Gamemaster Notes: Hapans

The Humans of Hapes exhibit mores and values shaped by their matriarchal society, and are physically different from baseline Humans in two major ways: their almost universal physical beauty, and a form of genetic night blindness. Hapans receive a -1 species penalty to all defense, attacks, saves, and skill checks in low light conditions, and -3 in darkness (in addition to any other applicable penalties). They also gain a +2 species bonus to Charisma. Their automatic language is Hapan; they must learn to speak Basic. Otherwise, Hapan characters receive the same bonuses as baseline Humans, including one extra skill point per level and one bonus feat at 1st level.

### The Hapes Consortium

Dave Wolverton's 1994 novel of romance, gambling, adventure, kidnapping, and honor gave the Expanded Universe a pair of matriarchal worlds joined by destiny. Hapes and Dathomir represented two sides of the same coin -- the former a wealthy capital in control of 62 nearby planets and secluded for thousands of years by choice; the latter a primitive place inhabited by Force-using witches and semi-intelligent domesticated rancors, isolated by the Emperor's fear of the Nightsisters (by sheer chance, Dathomir was also temporarily owned by Han Solo after a ridiculously high-stakes sabacc match). Hapans like Prince Isolder and Dathomiri like Teneniel Djo have had a major impact on many later EU books, especially The New Jedi Order line.



*The Courtship of Princess Leia* is packed with much more information about Hapes, and it's available at a quality bookseller near you.



## Part 2: Return to the Planet of the Amazons

By Cory Herndon

*This week's pair of excerpts from pirate captain Grove Bricker's Rebellion-era memoir Planet of the Amazons: The Tale of the Pirate Ship Mourning Glory describes the Hapan Queen Mother's personal starship, Star Home, from without and within.*

The ship ahead of us filled every inch of transparisteel in the cockpit, despite its still-considerable distance from the wounded *Mourning Glory*. Space was only visible around the edges. What I could see looked like a floating, domed castle sitting improbably in the void of space, backlit by the turbulent swirls of the Transitory Mists. The five huge pylons that curved down from the round central portion's equator gave it the look of a feeding insect. Inside the translucent dome, I could see movement -- people, droids, and small repulsorcraft.

"It's not actually the flagship; that's a common misconception," I barely heard first mate Kelan say. "*Star Home* is the Queen Mother's personal transport. From what I hear, it could stand up to a Star Destroyer, but not much more than that. It's the size that makes him so imposing."

"Ships aren't 'hims.'"

"Sorry, force of habit," Kelan continued. "It's a Hapan thing. Whatever the case, it's pointless to panic. We're in their tractor beam, the engines are out, the droid's frotzed, and that's that."

"We've got to do something," I said. Though stories of the Hapan amazons and their treatment of "foreign" pirates were legendary, I'd never met anyone who'd been inside personally, except Kelan, who was Hapan himself. I trusted him, though. And he'd assured me that the stories of torture and execution were greatly exaggerated. Usually, they'd just blow intruders out of the sky, or let Kelan's kin in the Mists deal with them.

"Tell the crew to lock down the cargo and get ready to fight," I said. "Just in case."

"If you want to die with the crew," he said. "Not my idea of a good time. Look, Hapans don't usually wantonly murder pirates -- not Hapan pirates anyway. It drains the gene pool. This whole region's littered with Hapan pirate bases."

"Right. Your old stomping grounds. Which, I might remind you, is why I'm worried. We're not flying a Hapan flag of any kind."

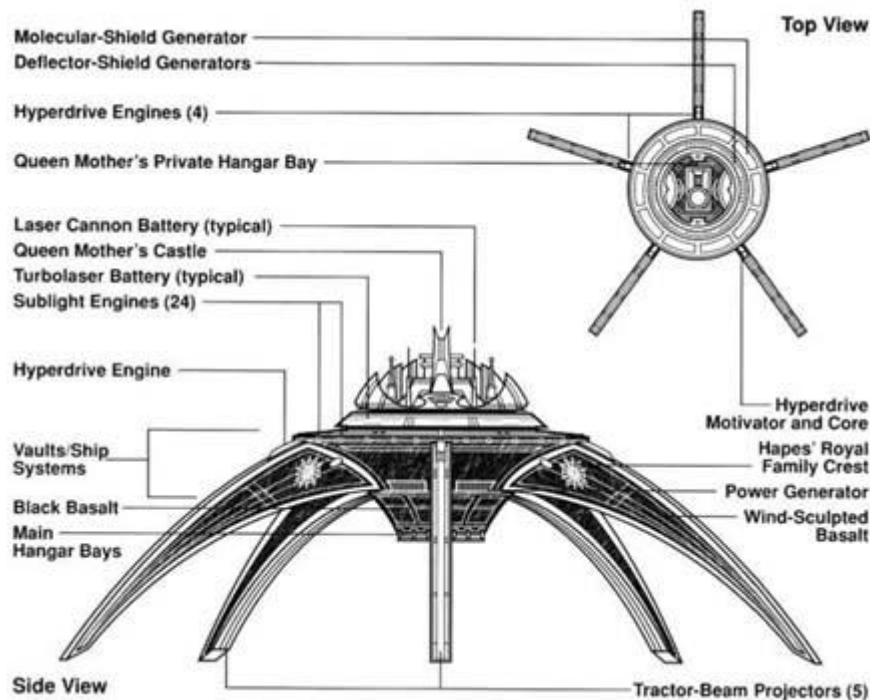
"No, but you have a Hapan first mate," Kelan said. "And at the moment, my advice as first mate is this: give me command. Let me talk to them in Hapan. It's our only chance."

"You really think that'll be enough?" I asked. "If they check the ship's registration --"

"Against what?" Kelan replied. "The Hapans and the Empire don't share files."

"Do all Hapan pirates know so much about what the Hapans and the Imperials share?"

"Some do," he answered.



At that moment, the ship lurched as the tractor operators on the massive, two-and-a-half kilometer vessel focused the beam. We picked up inevitable speed as the *Glory* fell into an artificial gravity well centered on the underbelly of *Star Home*. As my ship was dragged unwillingly beneath the behemoth, I saw two sliding doors open to reveal what looked like a cavernous hangar bay above. We weren't wriggling out of this one.

"All right, Captain," I said. "Don't screw this up."

"Grov, trust me. While we've got time, you should go tell the crew --"

"Tell them what?" a dusky female voice purred from behind my left shoulder. I shivered as Xanai Sowan's fingers came to rest on my shoulder, then winced as my Twi'lek engineer dug four fingernails into my flesh. Guess I'd be bunking in the cockpit again, or a Hapan brig, if I slept at all, and if *Star Home* didn't blow us to smithereens, which I had to admit was looking less likely.

Torture, then. And no Twi'lek to keep me company. Great.

Xanai gasped as her attention left my shoulder and she saw the underside of the massive ship. "What the frotz is that, Captain?"

"Come on, Xan," I said, "I'm heading below decks. You can help me give a little speech to the crew. I'll explain everything on the way, but we don't have much time." I threw a jaunty half-salute to Kelan and guided the Twi'lek by the elbow to the ladder leading belowdecks. "But first, don't call me 'Captain' for a while."

*The Mourning Glory was soon drawn into the large hangar bay built into the underbelly of Star Home. As a result of communications between the Hapan "Captain" Kelan Faal and an unseen female officer on the mighty castle-ship, a violent standoff was avoided. Most of the crew was confined to the Glory, but Faal and his "first mate" Bricker were taken by a band of amazon warriors and led away, unarmed but unbound. After a less-than-polite description of his captors, their scant garments, and theoretical recreational activities among members of the Hapan military, Bricker continued . . .*

As we emerged under the great dome of *Star Home*, we no longer stood within a starship. This was a small city living under a crystalline night sky, elegantly beautiful in design and utterly bizarre in composition. Buttresses and walls made of what looked like actual *stone* -- on a spaceship? -- comprised a towering central castle. Smaller stone buildings, and smaller domes, ringed the central structure, visible just over the artificial horizon. Our alluring captors marched Kelan and me up a cobblestone path in silence, striking us roughly when we dared to open our mouths. They took us past an incongruously chaotic flower garden that grew up around a small lake, and into the

castle through a small side passage a dozen meters from the obvious main entrance.

We were in near darkness again, and I heard the whine of microelectronics as the Hapan amazons activated night-vision goggles. They led us along for at least a half-kilometer, and then we came to a halt before an arched metal door built into the stone. The door slid aside and I was momentarily blinded, but within a few seconds I could make out the outlines of a grand vaulted hall. A maroon carpet lay before us, ending in a high-backed golden throne upon which sat Ta'a Chume. On either side, two dozen armored Hapan amazons stood at attention, menace in their shapely eyes.

"Welcome, gentlemen," the Queen of the Amazons purred. She was a diamond among jewels -- her physical beauty unmatched, her bearing as cold as ice. A narrow golden band that looked expensive rested atop her brow. The form-fitting gown she wore was made of expensive-looking material that changed colors in the artificial sunlight within the hall, and glimmered around a stunning figure as she stood and inclined her head, briefly, at each of us. The Queen drew aside her translucent veil and continued. "You are now guests of the Hapes Consortium. You will not speak unless spoken to. You will answer all of my questions, and the questions of my subordinates, or you will die. When I learn what I want to know, you may even be allowed to go free. I am the queen mother of the amazons of Hapes, Ta'a Chume, and until I say otherwise, you belong to me."

I opened my mouth to reply, but Kelan clamped a palm over my lips and shook his head.

"I see my Hapan kinsman understands," Ta'a Chume smiled like a predator. "Follow his lead, pirate, and we'll get along famously."

## **Gamemaster Notes: *Star Home***

Construction of the massive, ancient vessel *Star Home* was ordered by the very first Queen Mother, not long after the ancient Mandalorian Wars four thousand years before the rise of Palpatine. Its interior design is based on the Fountain Palace on Hapes, while the exterior resembles a five-legged bug. More floating city than starship, more museum piece than warship, *Star Home's* unique construction includes Hapan basalt, Charubah steel, and the finest alloys and technology from every world in the Consortium. Powerful shielding maintains structural integrity and protects *Star Home* from attack. Within the castle structure, thousands of priceless gifts from the 63 worlds of the Hapes Cluster are displayed in an ever-growing exhibit of royal wealth. Potential thieves would have better luck freeing a prisoner from an Imperial battle station than liberating one of the pieces in the Queen Mother's personal collection, but a few have tried and fatally failed.

Despite its ungainly appearance, the vessel is maintained in peak condition and is quite spaceworthy, propelled through hyperspace by four linked *Froond*-class hyperdrive engines and 24 sublight engines, each of which could propel a *Victory*-class star destroyer by itself. Six mighty Kerts-Bhrig power generators provide enough energy to keep the ship functioning independently for a century without maintenance.

*Star Home* usually orbits Hapes (constructed in space, the vessel does not have the necessary plating or shielding for atmospheric reentry), though the Queen Mother occasionally uses it for travel inside the Hapes Cluster. The ship is relatively well-armed considering its age and technically nonmilitary purpose. It also carries five squadrons of modern Hapan My'til fighters, and the Queen Mother's personal shuttle resides in the large hangar bay built into *Star Home's* belly. At the time of the events depicted in Grov Bricker's memoir, the ship had not been seen by non-Hapans for two millennia.

**Craft:** *Star Home*

**Class:** Space station

**Size:** Colossal (2,500 meters long)

**Hyperdrive:** x1

**Passengers:** 600 (average: nobles and retainers), total capacity 2,000

**Cargo Capacity:** 7,000 tons

**Consumables:** 5 years

**Cost:** Not for sale

**Maximum Speed in Space:** Cruising (4 squares per action)

**Atmospheric Speed:** n/a

**Crew:** 740 (500 engineers and techs, 90 starfighter pilots, 50 command staff, 100 soldiers; skilled +4)

**Initiative:** -4 (-8 size, +4 crew)

**Maneuver:** -4 (-8 size, +4 crew)

**Defense:** 26 (-8 size, +24 armor)

**Shield Points:** 600 (DR 40)

**Hull Points:** 900 (DR 15)

**Weapon:** Laser cannons (20); **Fire Arc:** turret (mounted on saucer equator, only two may fire on any given heading at once); **Attack Bonus:** +2 (-8 size, +4 crew, +6 fire control); **Damage:** 4d10; **Range Modifiers:** PB -4, S/M +0, L +2.

**Weapon:** Turbolasers (20); **Fire Arc:** turret (mounted on saucer equator, only two may fire on any given heading at once); **Attack Bonus:** +4 (-8 size, +4 crew, +8 fire control); **Damage:** 5d10; **Range Modifiers:** PB -6, S/M -2, L +0.

**Weapon:** Tractor beams (6); **Fire Arc:** Turret (mounted on saucer equator, only one may fire on any given heading at once); **Damage:** Special; **Range Modifiers:** PB -2, S/M +2, L +4.

## Part 3: Beneath the Planet of the Amazons

By Cory Herndon

*As described in Grov Bricker's controversial Rebellion-era memoir Planet of the Amazons: The Tale of the Pirate Ship Mourning Glory, Bricker and his captive crew arrived at Hapes after a three-week journey. Though they were allowed a surprising amount of freedom within the crystal domes of the massive castle-ship, the Corellian Bricker and his Hapan first mate Kelan Faal left Star Home in manacles, while the Mourning Glory was impounded and the rest of her crew shipped to a prison moon. Bricker and Faal soon found themselves chained to the stone walls of a torch-lit dungeon, deep beneath the Fountain Palace on Hapes.*

I wish I'd seen how that huge ship got through the mined, pirate-ridden Transitory Mists (and I know pirate-ridden, being a pirate myself). If we were going to find the crew and get out of this cursed sector, we'd need a way out.

Not that I really expected us to be going anywhere anytime soon, I didn't even know which moon the crew was taken to. I'm just an optimist by nature. But even an optimist has to recognize when he's bound in cold iron. The blindfold kept me from seeing how we got here, but it was definitely underground, judging from the long 'lift ride. We both hung with our arms above our heads and our feet barely able to touch to floor, chained to the wall. We were in a small 10-by-10-meter room that looked like it was based on the setting of a hundred ancient Coruscanti romance holos. My wrists were starting to chafe, and Kelan Faal was for some reason whistling a jaunty melody.

"Kelan, what are you doing?"

"Whistling, first mate Bricker."

"You can stop that now. It seems our little ruse didn't work."

"Sorry, captain," Kelan said. "I'm not worried, though."

"Not worried?!" I almost screamed, and then lowered my voice. "Not worried? We're in a *dungeon*, man. When *will* you start worrying?"

"Just a feeling," Kelan explained. "I've got to trust my own instincts. That's why you hired me, right?"

"Right," I sighed, and pointlessly tried to wriggle free of the iron manacles for the thousandth time. At that moment, a heavy metal door swung inward and bright yellow light flooded our dank chamber. The incongruously modern passageway outside made me wonder if the entire thing was a hallucination. The yellow glow cast the Queen Mother's shapely form in silhouette, and then without a word artificial lights I hadn't seen before raised within the dungeon and I was able to see her clearly.

Ta'a Chume was as cold and beautiful as ever. It was too bad she was probably going to kill me.

To my surprise, she went straight to my Hapan partner without speaking to or even acknowledging my existence. What the frotz?

After examining Kelan Faal like he was going to be the entrée at this evening's royal feast, Ta'a Chume smiled. I really hated when she did that. Kelan simply smiled back. "Yes?" he asked.

Ta'a Chume drew back a hand and slapped him without blinking, never once dropping her smile. "Kelan Faal, is it?"

Kelan's expression grew dark, and the smile left his face. "My name is Kelan Faal. I am a Hapan."

"You are a pirate, as are all that dwell in the Transitory Mists," the Queen replied. She sighed, and her dress shifted in a way that made me temporarily forget that she held me prisoner. "Yet you do not dwell in the Mists anymore, do you? You have chosen to leave the





bosom of mother Hapes and strike out in the galaxy."

"What of it?" Kelan asked. I could see he didn't have any better idea where this was going than I did.

"I seek information about one of your . . . kinsman. Another Hapan pirate, who has also left the galaxy behind. My son, Isolder." Ta'a Chume smiled again, and a shiver went down my spine. "Surely, the galaxy is not that large. Surely, you have heard of another Hapan pirate, like yourself, who is not content to stay in the Mists. Surely, you value your own life enough to tell me." She was no longer looking at Kelan like a piece of meat -- he was a handsome fellow, I admit -- but instead almost appeared . . . concerned? Yes, concern showed behind the icy threat of her gaze, but only when she looked at Kelan.

"I don't know what you're talking about," my first mate replied. "I've never heard of another Hapan pirate working the same spacelanes as myself and the captain, here, but surely, it *is* a much bigger galaxy than you think. You should leave the Cluster once in a while, your majesty."

She stared long and hard into Kelan's eyes, then scowled. "Very well. I *will* have you executed if you do not reveal his location. You shall spill your blood on Hapan soil, pirate, and the women of Hapes will rejoice, because of the crimes they will be told you have committed. You have until dawn tomorrow to change your mind."

Tired of being ignored, I decided to try to bargain with her. "Surely you don't mean both of us, your majesty? I'm just a simple cargo hauler, no matter what you may have been told. If you release me and my crew and let us go on our way, I assure you I won't rest until I find your son."

For the first time, Ta'a Chume looked at me, and I instantly regretted opening my mouth. She smiled that cold, enigmatic smile again, and my blood turned to ice. "Kelan, needless to say, your captain shall share your fate. Until dawn."

With that, she turned and stalked back through the door, which clanged shut behind her as the lights once again dimmed and plunged us into darkness.

"Kelan, are you sure you don't know who she's talking about?" I asked.

"I'm sure," he said. "But I'm also sure we're going to get out of this. An execution, a public execution, can only happen in front of the Fountain Palace. That means there's still a chance. Just . . . bear with me for the night, Captain. She won't kill us. Trust me."

"Like I have a choice," I muttered. "You picked a hell of a time to start acting like a Corellian, Kelan."

## Gamemaster Notes: Ta'a Chume in the Rebellion Era

A stunning woman even in maturity, Hapan Queen Mother Ta'a Chume during the Rebellion Era is quite possibly the most beautiful woman on a planet full of beautiful people -- gorgeous, cunning, and manipulative. New Republic scholars believe that Ta'a Chume is not her name but a title (it translates from Hapan as "Queen Mother"). Still, her actual name, whatever it might be, is never spoken on Hapes. When you accept the title of Ta'a Chume, it's for life. Around the time of Episode IV, she is searching for her son Isolder, who left home and turned pirate to hunt down the privateer that killed his brother.

She rarely leaves Hapes, but when she does, Ta'a Chume travels in *Star Home*, her 2.5-kilometer castle-ship, usually accompanied by a small fleet of support vessels. The encounter described in the first and second installments of this month's "Planet Hoppers" is a rare exception.

**Ta'a Chume:** Human (Hapan) Female Noble 19; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Defense 21 (+9 class, +2 Dex); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 69/11; Atk +14/+9/+4 melee (1d3-1, unarmed strike) or +16/+11/+6 ranged (3d4+2, mastercraft holdout blaster) or +16/+11/+6 ranged (special, gun of command); SQ Bonus class skill (Intimidate), coordinate +4, favor +7, inspire confidence, inspire greatness, resource access; SV Fort +6, Ref +12, Will +15; SZ M; FP 2; DSP 10; Rep +10; Str 9, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 19, Wis 16, Cha 22. Challenge Code H.

*Equipment:* Comlink, headband of the Chume, expensive clothing, gun of command, holdout blaster, robes of state, veil.

*Skills:* Appraise +26, Bluff +22, Computer Use +26, Craft (painting) +25, Diplomacy +31, Gather Information +14,

Intimidate +32, Knowledge (Hapes) +26, Knowledge (politics) +26, Knowledge (bureaucracy) +26, Read/Write Basic, Read/Write Hapan, Sense Motive +28, Speak Ancient Gallinorian, Speak Basic, Speak Hapan, Speak Huttese, Speak Ryl.

*Feats:* Fame, Frightful Presence, Headstrong, Improved Initiative, Influence, Lightning Reflexes, Persuasive, Skill Emphasis (Bluff), Skill Emphasis (Diplomacy), Skill Emphasis (Gather Information), Skill Emphasis (Intimidate), Skill Emphasis (Sense Motive), Weapon Group Proficiencies (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

## Part 4: Escape from the Planet of the Amazons

By Cory Herndon

*Though portrayed as militaristic and cruel in the best-selling Rebellion Era datafile Planet of the Amazons: The Tale of the Pirate Ship Mourning Glory, the laws and mores of Rebellion-era Hapan society were eventually found to be not unlike most of those in the Old Republic. Slavery was outlawed, pirates and smugglers were prosecuted, and in some cases crimes against the state were punishable by public execution. Unlike the Old Republic, however, "crimes against the state" could be instantly redefined by the state herself -- the Queen Mother.*

*In our final excerpt from Grov Bricker's memoir, he and his Hapan first mate Kelan Faal face execution unless they reveal the whereabouts of Prince Isolder, the Queen's son. At dawn, unfamiliar amazon guards in dress regalia arrive and lead the chained pirates to an open-air amphitheater near the Fountain Palace...*

Having gotten familiar with *Star Home*, I wasn't surprised to see the elegant design of the Fountain Palace, or the way it fit into the rest of the capital city like a jewel. Its size was another matter -- the version on the Queen's giant ship is built to scale, as it turns out. The real thing must have stood two kilometers away from the amphitheater where Kelan and I awaited our fate, yet it still filled the skyline behind the noisy crowd and cast a dark, gloomy shadow.

The guards hadn't blindfolded us or gagged us, so Kelan had time to explain a public execution on the long walk from the dungeon. He still seemed disturbingly jaunty for a man being lead to his death.

The execution would be carried out by the gun of command, an incredibly rare weapon built on the Consortium world Charubah. According to Kelan, it pretty much turned someone into a zombie, willing to do whatever was commanded of them. The executioner would shoot the condemned man (it was illegal to execute a female on Hapes under any circumstances) with the gun of command, hand him an ordinary blaster, and order him to blow his own head off. It was brutal, but sounded like a pretty effective deterrent to pirates or lawbreakers that dared venture this far into the sector.

We waited almost half an hour on a raised platform in the center of the amphitheater as the audience filed in, some somber, some chatting like it was another day at the Podraces. Finally, a hush fell over the assembly as the Queen's shuttle settled into the dusty ground next to the platform. A ramp lowered and Ta'a Chume descended, accompanied by a dozen dressed-up guards and another dozen robed retainers, all of whom wore hoods. The crowd roared, and the Queen Mother raised a hand to acknowledge her people as the entourage mounted the platform and arranged themselves in a circle around us.

There wasn't a male in the crowd, or among the retainers and guards. Just us two pirates.

"Women of Hapes," Ta'a Chume boomed through a comlink that must have been hidden somewhere on her embroidered robes of state, "We bring before you two men -- pirates -- who have repeatedly violated our borders, taken Hapan women as slaves, and still refuse to accept Hapan justice. We have declared them enemies of the state. You are here to witness their ultimate punishment." She wasn't kidding the day before about the crimes the crowd would be *told* we'd committed. I'd never run slaves in my life.

"According to our ancient traditions, the condemned have the right to ask twelve noblewomen for mercy. We assure them there is none to be found." At that, the Queen took a step backward as the hooded figures advanced.

I still hadn't seen the executioner, though I wasn't sure how I would recognize him. Or her.

"Ladies," I began, "I wish to, er, beg the mercy of the . . . court?"

"Let me handle this, Captain," Kelan said. He began to speak to them in the mellifluous Hapan language, words as elegant as the palace that loomed on the skyline.

He spoke for fifteen minutes, eloquently, passionately. Not one of the well-shaped figures under the robes moved a muscle. Finally the Queen Mother declared our arbitration period up, and the robed figures returned to their places.

"Very well," Ta'a Chume said. "You have had your last chance. More than one, in fact. We do not relish giving this order, but give it we shall. Kelan Faal, still nothing to say for yourself?"

"This is ridiculous," Kelan replied. I could have punched him. This was his plan? Insulting the Queen Mother?

"So be it," Ta'a Chume said. She nodded to the nearest guard, who I saw was wearing two blasters on her belt. *There* was the executioner I'd been looking for. One blaster appeared to be gold-plated, the other quite ordinary, even primitive by Imperial standards.

With a grimace she couldn't hide, the warrior unsnapped her holster and drew the golden weapon, aiming it at my first mate. It almost offended me, I have to admit, even under the circumstances. Who was the captain around here, anyway? This entire misadventure had taken a toll on my ego.

"Take aim," Ta'a Chume said.

The crowd went silent. But as the amazon Queen opened her mouth to continue, one of the robed women suddenly threw her hood back and drew a second golden blaster.

Before anyone could react, she tossed it to Kelan, who caught it in two unbound hands. I hadn't been watching Kelan's hands any more than the women on the platform, and he'd somehow unlocked his manacles as he pleaded our case. The woman shouted something to Kelan in Hapan that I didn't understand, but I did recognize one word: "Isolder."

"Thank you, Lady Elliar," Kelan said with a slight bow of the head. The guards, even the one holding a gun on my Hapan friend, were frozen, uncertain.

Ta'a Chume's eyes blazed. "Elliar, you've signed your own death warrant," the Queen Mother growled.

Kelan raised the gun of command and pointed it right at Ta'a Chume's head. He pulled the trigger without a word, and a weird distortion flashed from the muzzle and struck the Queen. Her blazing eyes dilated, and she slumped visibly.

"Shut up, mother," he said, "and order the release of Captain Bricker and the crew of the *Mourning Glory*. Immediately. After that, why don't you just stare into the sky for awhile?"

In a dazed voice, Ta'a Chume did just that. The guards hesitated for a moment, but at the prodding of Lady Elliar, they hustled over and undid my manacles. It seemed that no one dared contradict the word of the Queen Mother, even when it was obvious they weren't exactly *her* words.

"Kelan," I said. "What's going on?"

"I'm sorry, Captain," he replied. "I never thought she'd really go through with it. You probably guessed that my name isn't Kelan Faal."

"Really."

He nodded lamely. "Really."

"Isolder, I presume?"

"I knew those Hapan language tapes would start working eventually. Captain, could you excuse me for a second?"

Kelan -- Isolder -- seized the comlink from his mother's lapel and turned to the assembled crowd. "People of Hapes! The inequities of our society --"

Isolder suddenly stopped and stiffened.

Ta'a Chume had not remained stunned for long. Elliar slumped in a heap on the platform, disabled while I was watching Kelan. How Ta'a Chume had moved so fast, I still don't know. The amazon Queen pressed the guard's gun of command into my first mate's back; her other hand held one sparking, severed end of a cable connected to



**Kelan/Isolder**

the PA system. The loudspeakers played only static, and the crowd remained stunned and silent.

"Chume'da," Ta'a Chume said quietly as she pulled the trigger. "Leave this life and come home."

There was nothing I could do. Isolder's eyes glassed over instantly as electromagnetic energy shocked his nervous system, and his jaw went a slack. The comlink slipped from his hands. He turned to Ta'a Chume and nodded. "Mother," he said as he walked to her side.

"Kelan," I said, "Come on, pal. She shook it off. You shake it off." Out of ideas, I snatched up a dropped blaster and aimed it at Ta'a Chume. "Listen, lady --"

The royal guards finally took action. The nearest lunged from the side and grasped me in a velvet bear hug that in any other circumstances might have been extremely pleasant. The blaster dropped again to the cold, polished stone.

"I think not," Ta'a Chume replied, her voice no longer echoing within the amphitheatre but still cold and powerful. "I could still have you executed, but that moment seems to have passed. I could use this weapon to order you to leave and forget all you have seen, but eventually the memories would come back. I could imprison you forever, but frankly, your Corellian stench overwhelms me."

"So . . ." I began.

"So you shall be returned to your ship, pirate, where your crew will be waiting. The Hapes Consortium is not without mercy. Our favored son has returned to us, and you were instrumental, whether you chose to be so or not. By the time the Chume'da recovers, you will be on your way out of the Hapan system. You will meet a Battle Dragon that will escort you through the Transitory Mists, and Hapan eyes will not light on you again. If they do, your lives and your ship are forfeit."

"Your highness," I said, stunned a little bit myself. "My ship needs a first mate. If you are merciful --"

"Do not push your luck, Corellian," Ta'a Chume said. "Guards, take him to the hangar."

As the amazon women dragged me away, I got one last look at my friend Kelan, who stood hovering over the unconscious Lady Elliar. He was staring like an idiot, but a slight frown of concern was etched into his daze. I pitied and envied him at the same time. But mostly, I really wanted to get my hands on a gun of command, and get the frotz off of this planet.

I'm not without diplomatic skills myself. Surely, one of these guards would understand the concept of bargaining.

## Royal Armaments Guild of Charubah Gun of Command

The Charubah gun of command uses normal blaster power packs, and can only be found on the black market within the Hapes Consortium. Only the exacting artisans at the Royal Armaments Guild of Charubah hold the secret to constructing these powerful weapons.

**Cost:** 25,000; **Damage:** Special; **Critical:** n/a; **Range Increment:** 6 m (maximum range); **Weight:** 8 kg; **Stun Fort DC:** n/a; **Damage Type:** Special; **Size:** medium; **Group:** Blaster pistols.

**Special:** The electromagnetic wave fired by a gun of command forces a hit character to make a Will save (DC equal to the total attack roll + 10). On a successful save, the wave stuns the character, who becomes unable to resist simple commands -- even lethal ones or a suicide order -- for 1d6 rounds. On a failed save, the same effect takes hold but lasts for 10d6 rounds. This special damage counts as a Force-based attack for characters with ranks in Force Defense.